

In the Claims:

1. (currently amended) An apparatus comprising:

a towing vessel having a bow, a stern, opposing starboard and port gunwales and an operator's station between the gunwales and positioned at least one of amidships and forward thereof;

a skeletal towing frame attached to the vessel for supporting an elevated tow rope attachment point substantially above the vessel, wherein a first, generally vertical support attached to the starboard gunwale, a second, generally vertical support attached to the port gunwale, and wherein the first and second supports have sufficient length so that vertical extremities thereof extend substantially above the vessel, a third support attached to the vessel forward of the first and second supports, with the third support extending upwardly and aft, and wherein the third support is spaced from the first and second supports a sufficient distance to impart stability to the skeletal towing structure, and wherein upper portions of the first, second and third supports are coupled with a generally horizontal bridging portion located generally above and proximate the operator's station to at least amidships and forward thereof, wherein the bridging portion is sufficient for withstanding forces from towing a human performer; and

a tow rope attachment point fitted with the bridging portion for attaching a tow rope thereto for towing the performer.

2. (original) The apparatus recited in claim 1, wherein each of the first and second supports are rotatably attached to the respective starboard and port gunwales of the vessel so that at least a portion of each of the first and second supports is rotatable into a horizontal storage position.

3. (original) The apparatus recited in claim 1, wherein the bridging portion includes at least one generally horizontal member extending laterally across and spaced above the vessel.

4. (original) The apparatus recited in claim 3, wherein the tow rope attachment point is generally positioned above the operator's station.

5. (original) The apparatus recited in claim 1, wherein the first, second and third supports are rigid members.

6. (currently amended) An apparatus comprising:

a towing vessel having a bow, a stern, opposing starboard and port gunwales and an operator station between the gunwales and positioned at least one of amidships and forward thereof;

a support having opposing base portions attached to port and starboard portions of the vessel, the support having a central portion between the opposing base portions positioned generally above and proximate the operators station for supporting a tow rope attachment point substantially above the vessel, wherein the central portion is positioned to at least amidships and forward thereof, and wherein the central portion is sufficient for withstanding forces from towing a human performer; and

a tow rope attachment point fitted with the bridging central portion for attaching a tow rope thereto for towing the performer.

7. (previously presented) The apparatus recited in claim 6, wherein the support is rotatably attached to starboard and port gunwales of the vessel so that at least a portion of the support is rotatable into a horizontal storage position.

8. (previously presented) The apparatus recited in claim 6, wherein the support comprises a skeletal frame.

9. (previously presented) The apparatus recited in claim 8, wherein the skeletal

frame comprises first and second generally vertical supports attached respectively to port and starboard gunwales, and wherein the first and second supports have sufficient length so that vertical extremities thereof extend substantially above the vessel.

10. (previously presented) The apparatus recited in claim 9, further comprising a third support attached to the vessel forward of the first and second supports, with the third support extending upwardly and aft, and wherein the third support is spaced from the first and second supports a sufficient distance to impart stability to the skeletal towing structure, and wherein upper portions of the first, second and third supports are coupled with a generally horizontal bridging portion located generally above and proximate the operator's station.

11. (currently amended) A towing apparatus for improving aerial characteristics of a performance by a performer using a water sport implement, the towing apparatus comprising:

a vessel behind which the performer is to be towed, the vessel including a bow, a stern and an operator station positioned amidships between opposing sides;

a relatively rigid vertical support structure fitted between the sides of the vessel, the support structure having a generally horizontal portion at a height substantially above the level of the operator station, wherein the generally horizontal portion is positioned to at least amidships and forward thereof, and wherein the horizontal portion is sufficient for withstanding forces from towing a human performer ; and

a tow rope attached to the horizontally portion of the support structure for towing the performer therefrom while operating the vessel in a body of water.

12. (previously presented) The apparatus recited in claim 11, further comprising attaching means for attaching the support structure to opposing sides of the vessel, the attaching means operable so as to permit the support structure to be rotated

downwardly so that the vessel may pass underneath a bridge or into a boat house.

13. (previously presented) The apparatus recited in claim 11, wherein the support structure comprises a skeletal frame having a forward vertical support element and an aft vertical support element, and wherein the apparatus further comprises a plurality of longitudinally extending bars fixedly attached between each of the forward and aft vertical support elements thus forming a skeletal frame.

14. (previously presented) The apparatus recited in claim 11, wherein the support is rearwardly angled for having its lower extremity forward of its upper extremity.

15. (previously presented) The apparatus recited in claim 11, wherein the support is forwardly angled for having its lower extremity aft of its upper extremity.

16. (previously presented) The apparatus recited in claim 11, further comprising a tow rope connecting element attached to the bridging portion for attaching the tow rope thereto.